

NEW FASTER MITIGATION PROCESS TO REDUCE PLANNING BURDEN

- *New conservation credits scheme is gaining ground*

18 October 2010: While house development is virtually stalled and other development limps along, a new, simpler, more effective way of dealing with the complex processes and unnecessary hurdles for developers is winning approval. Lower charges from removing the need to sterilize developable land and better predictions of total mitigation costs will reduce the planning burden on developers and should help the green shoots of recovery, the Environment Bank believes.

Currently there is very little real benefit from on-site environmental mitigation. It is costly, time consuming and unpredictable. Robert Gillespie, Managing Director of the Environment Bank believes Section 106 has failed to deliver. Instead of developments to mitigate for environmental impacts, the policy has resulted in pitiful, poorly executed piecemeal schemes often repositories for supermarket trolleys, rather than providing a haven for wildlife.

Gillespie said: “Every fortnight England loses a species of wildlife, according to Oxford University. Yet reports and recommendations ignore the one sector whose involvement could really make a difference – private industry. With the popularity of “localism”, local communities want to see developers giving more appropriate compensation such as more environmental gain including large areas of green space. If people see the private sector is contributing to conservation and guarding against biodiversity loss, together with access for local communities, people will feel less disconnected and hostile to commercial or residential development.”

The Environment Bank’s new conservation credits scheme, currently under consideration, requires developers to purchase credits to offset impacts caused by land lost to development, in return for greater planning clarity, reduced programme timing costs and better net developable areas for developers.

Robert Gillespie promises a joined up national process to make it easier and simpler for planners and developers to mitigate against land lost to development. The purchase of eco-credits will go towards landscape scale conservation sites. By facilitating and brokering this new large scale funding, the Bank believes it can improve the quality of natural landscapes

and redress the biodiversity lost from development and intensification of agriculture. The first pilot site, 1000 square miles at the Thames Headwaters, is currently underway.

Gillespie concluded: "In times of austerity and a shrinking contribution from the public sector, this private sector money would be used to fund biodiversity at a large scale and could be extended to pay for landscape conservation and other ecosystem services."

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Notes to Editors

THE ENVIRONMENT BANK (www.environmentbank.com)

The Environment Bank aims to assist planning authorities in developing habitat banking policy; identify and assess potential landscape scale sites; assist land owners in putting their land forward for identification as conservation sites if suitable; implement environmental enhancement plans for chosen conservation sites.

In addition, the Environment Bank intends to monitor credit spending and delivery through reporting practice tailored to assist with a local planning authorities ARM and take action where contractual management obligations are not being met by land owners.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and The Environment Bank Ltd have already worked together on a pilot mitigation scheme involving the translocation of reptiles from a brown field development site in exchange for a calculated sum, which was used to purchase land as part of a Living Landscape project within the Cotswold Water Park.